

W. JENKS'S EXPRESS.

BY THOMAS A. JANVIER.

WHEN Billy Jenks's father failed, and Billy had to leave school, all in a whiff, most of us were mighty sorry to have him go. He was a queer little chap, but he was good all the way through. Somehow, he always was coming out in a square sort of way from the tight places where other boys went crooked. Most of the fellows thought very highly of him. I know I did.

My father told me all about Mr. Jenks's failure, for he knew that I would be interested in it on Billy's account. Mr. Jenks had indorsed notes for somebody, and this other man had failed and had carried Mr. Jenks down with him. I could n't quite understand the whole thing, but it seemed that, if he had tried to, Mr. Jenks might have got out of paying anything at all; but he did n't try to. He was "behaving nobly," my father said: making ready to turn over everything to his creditors and to go and live in a little house that belonged to his wife, over in the shabby end of the town—a house that his wife had bought for her old nurse to live in, and that happened to be empty because the old nurse had just died.

My father and all the rest of the creditors—except old Mr. Skimmington—hoped to arrange matters so that Mr. Jenks could go on. He was in an excellent business, my father said, and if he had an opportunity he would be all straight again in no time. Mr. Skimmington was a queer old fellow: just as cranky and cross-grained as he could possibly be. He was very rich, but he kept on working as hard as ever; and that was very hard indeed. Whenever anybody asked him why he did not retire from business and enjoy himself,—and people who did not know him very well used to ask him this, now and then,—he would draw himself up and say, "Enjoy myself? I *am* enjoying myself, sir! I began to work when I was nine years old, sir; and I have been working ever since. For more than sixty years I have been a useful citizen; and to be useful is *my* idea of enjoyment. I hate a drone—and either you are a drone or you would be one if you could. Good-day, sir!" And then the old fellow would stalk away as stiff as a poker. I never met anybody who liked him much.

Unluckily, it was Mr. Skimmington who held most of Mr. Jenks's notes; and Mr. Skimmington

refused point-blank to join the other creditors in giving Mr. Jenks more time.

"No, sir," he said; "it shall not be done. Jenks has been fool enough to put his name to paper, and he must take the consequences! It will teach him a valuable lesson, sir,—a lesson that will do him good as long as he lives. It did *me* good, and I know what I'm talking about. I put *my* name to paper in '57,—and down I went! Did anybody give *me* an extension? Not a bit of it! I had to fight my way up again; and that fight made a man of me, sir. Jenks is a young fellow still, and this will be a very useful experience for him. Let *him* fight *his* way up, just as I did. I repeat, sir, it will do him good. Not another word! My mind is made up: into bankruptcy he goes, just as sure as my name is Jeremiah Skimmington!"

But Mr. Jenks did not go into bankruptcy—and what kept him out of it was Billy.

Billy told me that when he got home from school, and found what a mess things were in, he felt as if he'd like to sit down and cry. But it struck him that crying would do no good; so he set himself to thinking about what he could do to help his father and mother in their trouble. He thought away as hard as ever he could think for about two days, without hitting on anything—for he was only ten years old, and little for his age, so that it was not easy to find a way in which he could be really useful. They were still living in their handsome house, and Billy still had his donkey and donkey-cart; and to help his thinking—for the donkey-cart had no springs and he believed that joggling might shake up his ideas—he drove about most of the time.

On the third day after he got home, he happened to be driving along by the New Row. He was very low in his mind, and was not paying attention to anything in particular, and it gave him a start when he found that somebody was calling him. He pulled Jenny up short, and looked around; and there on the high sidewalk—for the road had been cut down along the New Row—he saw a nice-looking old lady who wore spectacles, and who carried a big traveling-bag by her side, and a

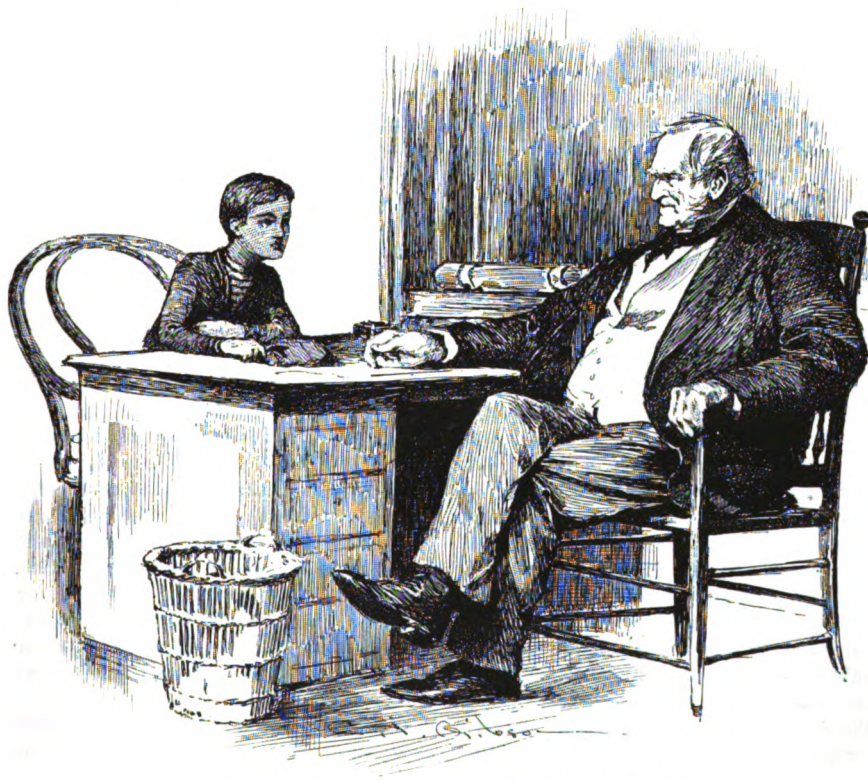
little bag in her hand, and a bundle under her arm. She looked hot and tired and flustered.

"Oh, little boy," the old lady said, "I have called to you several times. I have such a load to carry that I know I never can get to the station in time for the train. Will you please carry my bag down in your donkey-cart? I'll go down by the short cut and meet you; and I'll gladly give you a quarter."

Of course Billy said that he would be very glad indeed to oblige her; and he put the big bag and

it would pay an enterprising man well to start one, I'm sure. And now, here comes my train. Good-bye,—I shall not soon forget my little express-man, I can tell you! You certainly are a very well-behaved boy,—for a boy. Good-bye, again." Then the old lady got into the car and the train started.

It was while Billy was driving home that he suddenly woke up to the fact that the nice old lady had shown him a way in which he could help his father. He would be an express-man,—that is to



BILLY INTERVIEWS MR. WILKINSON. (SEE NEXT PAGE.)

the little one, too, in the cart, and chirped up Jenny, and whisked off to the station in no time.

Presently the old lady came; and then he hitched Jenny and helped the old lady to check the big bag and tried to make things generally comfortable for her. Of course, he would n't take the quarter that she offered him; and when she found that he was really in earnest, she thanked him very gratefully and put the money away.

"I'm very much obliged to you, indeed, my dear," she said, "for if you had n't helped me so kindly, I certainly should have missed my train." And then she added, "How stupid it is that in a town of this size there should not be any express;

say, an express-boy,—in dead earnest! He had often heard other people complain about the difficulty of getting luggage to and from the station, and he was sure that the old lady was right in saying that an express-service would pay. What pleased him most of all, was the thought that here he was, all ready to go into the business—for the donkey-cart would make a very good express-wagon to begin with; and both the donkey-cart and the donkey were his own.

But when he went home, he found himself brought up with a round turn. His father told him to come into the library. Mr. Jenks seemed very solemn about it; and when Billy went in he

found his mother there, and she looked as if she had been crying; but she seemed to be as cheerful as a cricket. Then Mr. Jenks told Billy that he was very sorry, but that in a few days nearly everything about the house was to be sold, and that Jenny and the donkey-cart would have to be sold with the rest!

Billy told me afterward that when his father said that, he felt just as if somebody had tripped his heels from under him and let him down with a bang. It only upset him still more, when his mother put her arms around him and kissed him, and told him not to mind the loss of Jenny, but to be her brave boy and take a share in the family troubles without complaining.

He was not prepared to say, just then, that what was bothering him was not the loss of Jenny, but the loss of his express-business, — for he felt in his bones, somehow, that his father and mother would not like to have him to go to work for them, and he hoped that if only he could get the business started without their knowing about it, so that he could prove to them what a good business it was, and how well he could manage it, they would gladly let him go on with it.

So, instead of telling all about his plan, he took another tack and asked if Jenny and the donkey-cart were not his own; and, if they were, how they could be sold away from him. When it was explained to him that until he was twenty-one years old everything that was called his really, in law, belonged to his father, and so must be sold to pay his father's debts, he made his father and mother just miserable — as he found out afterward — by saying that he would go and talk matters over with Mr. Wilkinson; for it was not like Billy to be thinking of himself when other people were in trouble, and they were afraid that the family misfortunes were making him selfish.

Mr. Wilkinson was Mr. Jenks's lawyer, and he and Billy were great friends. He was a kind old gentleman; and when Billy sent in a card with "W. Jenks. On Important Business," written on it, he invited Billy in. Billy knew that the lawyer's time was very valuable, and he went straight to the point. "Can or can not my donkey and donkey-cart be sold to pay my father's debts?" he asked. And Mr. Wilkinson came straight to the point, too, by answering, "Of course they can." Billy bit his lip hard, and tried to keep his self-control; but he could not help giving just one sob; — he had so set his heart upon helping his father; and here was his plan for helping him all knocked into a cocked hat!

Mr. Wilkinson was very sorry for Billy and tried to comfort him. But, when he found that Billy would n't be comforted, he spoke a little sharply

and said that he had expected better things of Billy, and told him he was too big a boy to be selfish about a miserable donkey, while his father was losing everything he owned, and never making any complaint about it at all.

At any other time, Billy would have had something to say to Mr. Wilkinson for calling his Jenny "a miserable donkey"; but just then he forgot to stand up for her. In a very fragmentary way — for it was all that he could do to keep from bursting out crying — he told Mr. Wilkinson all about his plan for helping his father, and how the loss of Jenny and the donkey-cart must, of course, upset it completely. Mr. Wilkinson listened to Billy very attentively without speaking a word, and was silent for a little while after he had finished.

"Billy, you are a very sensible boy," he said at last; "sensible enough, I'm sure, to see the difference between a business transaction and a personal obligation. What I have to propose to you is a business transaction. When Jenny and the cart are sold, as they must be, I'll buy them myself; and then, for a fixed annual payment, I'll let you have them to run your express-business with. Money is pretty low just now, and I'll be quite satisfied to get five per cent. out of my investment. I reckon that the lot will cost me about a hundred dollars, so you will have to pay me five dollars a year. Now, don't interrupt me," — Billy was trying to say that he could not think of letting Mr. Wilkinson do this act of great kindness for him, — "for interrupting me won't do any good at all. We're talking business now, and nothing else. I am to get a reasonable return for my money, and you will have a good margin for your own profit. My offer is just what I told you it was a moment ago — a straight-out business proposition, and you need n't hesitate a moment about accepting it, if you think well of it."

Well, the long and short of it was that Billy did accept the offer; and as he was going away, after shaking hands with Mr. Wilkinson and saying how very much obliged he was to him, Mr. Wilkinson said:

"You can begin business whenever you please, Billy. Until the sale takes place, the donkey and cart will be yours, and after it takes place, they will be mine. Therefore, as the property is, and will continue to be, vested in the firm," — Mr. Wilkinson waved his hand as if he were speaking to a judge on the bench, — "there is no reason why operations should not begin right away. My relation to this firm," Mr. Wilkinson added, as Billy had his hand on the door knob, "is that of a special partner. I put a fixed sum into the concern, and I am responsible for the firm's debts only so far as that sum goes. If you plunge madly

into baggage-smashing, William Jenks, and smash more than one hundred dollars' worth of trunks, don't look to me to meet your liabilities, for I won't!"

And then Mr. Wilkinson grinned at Billy, and Billy tried hard to smile at Mr. Wilkinson,—but he was so grateful for what Mr. Wilkinson had done that it was all that he could do to keep from crying. However, he got away without breaking down, having steadied himself by the reflection that he was now a man of business, and as such must hold the tender emotions in check.

What pleased him most of all was the advice that his partner had given him,—to begin work right away,—and the confidence he now felt that, with Mr. Wilkinson for a partner, his father and mother would be sure to let him go ahead. He was so pleased with it all that he started for home on a dead run.

But all the wind was taken out of his sails when he reached home, on finding that his mother had been called away in a hurry by a telegram bringing word that his Uncle John was sick, and that his father had gone with her, and that they would not be back until the next evening. Billy was sorry to hear that his Uncle John was sick,—at least, he was as sorry as he reasonably could be about the sickness of an uncle whom he had seen only two or three times in the course of his life, and whom he might have met anywhere in the street without recognition. For his mother, though, he was very sorry indeed; for he knew she was very fond of her brother John,—and it did seem hard that this fresh trouble should come to her with all the others. Then, being reminded of the family troubles, he presently forgot all about his Uncle John's sickness and thought only of his project for making these troubles lighter by running an express-wagon.

It was evident, since his father and mother had gone away, that he could not talk over his plan with them until they came back,—and that meant, certainly, the loss of at least one whole day. What he wished was to begin at once; and the more he thought about it, and, especially, the more that he reflected upon the assured position he had gained by going into partnership with Mr. Wilkinson, the more did he feel that waiting was unnecessary. Besides, it occurred to him, how delightful it would be to have some money—his first day's earnings—to give his father as a welcome home! This last thought settled the matter. He went down to the carriage-house, and, with some black paint that was there, began to put a sign on the spatter-board along each side of the donkey-cart,—to the great delight of the small boy who was taking care of the stables, now that the coachman and

regular helpers had been discharged. Billy was not much of a hand at sign-painting, but, as a sign, his sign was a success; for the big, sprawly letters could be read a long distance away, and the queerness of the work certainly would attract attention wherever it was seen. What he printed was this:

W. JENKS'S EXPRESS.

Billy was so pleased with his handiwork that he could have stood and looked at it all the rest of the afternoon; but he again remembered, after a while, that he was a man of business and that, as he had heard his father say, to a man of business time was money;—though just how time could be money, he did not very clearly understand. What he did understand, though, was that, if he meant his express to have a good start, he ought to go down to the station and tell the station-master, Mr. Ruggles, that he was prepared to carry baggage to and from the trains; and it also occurred to him that, if it did n't cost too much, he ought to advertise his business in *The Gazette*.

Mr. Ruggles stopped telephoning something and seemed to be astonished, Billy thought, when Billy told how he was going to start an express and asked if orders for it might be left at the station. But Mr. Ruggles kept his astonishment inside of himself and answered, in his solemn way, "If anybody leaves orders here for this express of yours, Billy, whether the same comes by word of mouth, or by mail, or through this here instrument, all I can say is: you shall get 'em sure,"—and then he began to telephone again. So that was all right.

The Gazette was not the very best sort of newspaper. Its editor put into it many unpleasant things which were only half true, or were not true at all, and every now and then somebody would sue it for libel. Only a short time before, as it happened, the editor had been made to pay very heavy damages for something that he had published that was all wrong; and the lawyer who had won the case against the paper was Mr. Wilkinson. Billy, of course, did not know anything of this. He knew that *The Gazette* was the only paper in the town and that he must put his advertisement in that paper, or else not advertise at all.

In a general way, he knew that advertising cost very heavily, and so he made his announcement short and to the point. He thought very hard over it, and finally wrote one that, he decided, would do. But after he had it all in shape, he suddenly began to wonder whether it would not be

dishonest to call the express his, when, in reality, it was a joint undertaking in which all the capital belonged to his special partner. Billy was just as sound as a little dollar about honesty. So he changed the advertisement to make it fit in with what was right, or what he thought was right, and then took it to the newspaper office.

It gave Billy a regular cold shiver when the young man behind the desk took it, made dabs at it with a pen for a minute or two, and then said, "In display type this will cost you four dollars for the first insertion, and two dollars and seventy-five cents for each subsequent insertion;" and added, "Special rates if it goes in by the month, you know."

All that Billy could say was "Oh!" and he felt a lump coming up in his throat. The idea of paying so much money for mere advertising quite took his breath away.

A man standing behind the counter had been looking on in a queer sort of way, and now he said, "What is it, George?" and reached out his hand for the advertisement. When he had read it, his eyes gave a queer sort of twinkle, and he stepped right up to Billy and said:

"We won't charge you anything for this; — not at first, anyway. If the express-business turns out all right, we can make terms by the year; and, if it does n't pay, why, you will have saved this much capital at the start."

"I don't want you to print this for nothing, sir," Billy began. "I can't pay four dollars just now; but I've got a dollar, and —"

But the man cut him short: "Don't you say another word. I'm the editor of this paper, and if I choose to print an ad. for nothing, it's nobody's loss but my own."

Billy did not wish to accept a favor like this from an entire stranger; but the editor was so pleasant about it that Billy finally gave in, — with the understanding that if by the end of the week the business had made a good start he might come back and they would make a regular bargain for printing the advertisement by the year.

As he left the office he heard the editor say to the young man behind the desk, "There's not a speck of libel in it, and it will make old Wilkinson just fairly howl on the house-tops!" and then they both burst out into roars of laughter.

Billy could not help wondering what it could be that would make so very dignified and quiet a man as Mr. Wilkinson do so absurd a thing as to climb on top of the houses and howl; and why anything like that should be the best joke of the season he could not see. He concluded that it all was some joke that he did not understand.

But Mr. Wilkinson saw where the joke was —

though it did not strike him as being "the best joke of the season" exactly, when *The Gazette* came out the next morning with this advertisement in it:

EXPRESS!

**BAGGAGE AND PARCELS CAREFULLY
CARRIED**

BY

W. JENKS.

D. WEBSTER WILKINSON, Esq.,

SPECIAL PARTNER.

TERMS MODERATE.

Please leave directions with Mr. Ruggles at the
Railway Station.

e. d. t. o. s.

Well, at first, Mr. Wilkinson was angry about it — almost as angry as the editor of *The Gazette* expected, in fact; but he had the good sense to laugh when people poked fun at him about his new business; and to a few of his intimate friends he told the whole story, — and nobody thought any the worse of him when, to show that Billy had not meant to make fun of him, and in self-defense, he had to tell how kind-hearted he had been.

While the advertisement, in one way, was all wrong, simply as an advertisement it was a tremendous success. What with the wish to make fun of Mr. Wilkinson, the good reason for praising him, and the kindly feeling for Billy, — all of which the advertisement created when it came to be understood, — the whole town, before noon, was ringing with it; so that "W. Jenks's Express" was better advertised in half a day than most new business ventures are in half a year.

Mike, the stable-boy, — who had a most unnatural faculty for waking up early, — called Billy the next morning, just at the edge of daylight; and in the cool, gray dawn, Billy drove out through the yard gates and down to the station to meet the 5:55 train. There was not a soul on the streets, and he was glad of it; for now that he was actually started as an express-man, he felt a little shy and queer about it. The only people around the station were a man with a wooden leg, and Mr. Ruggles, who had a green flag in his hand and looked very sleepy. Presently the train came along and stopped; but nobody got

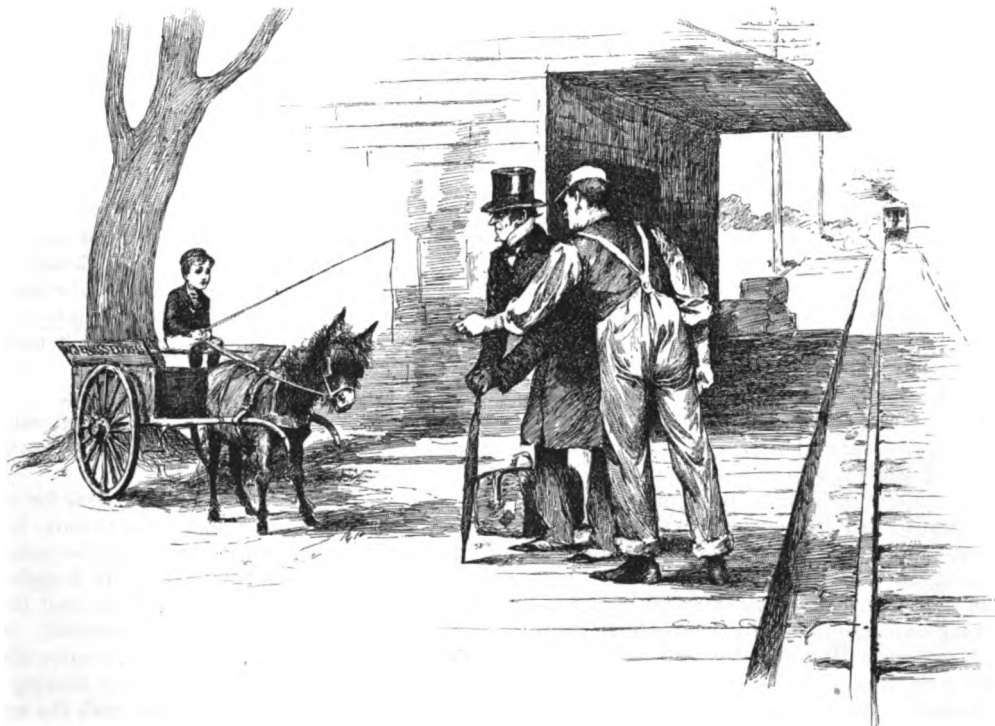
off. The man with the wooden leg got on, and then the train went puffing away down the line.

"Better luck next time, Billy," said Mr. Ruggles, as he rolled up his flag, yawned, and went into the station. Billy felt very flat, somehow. But the next train was not due until 7:20, and he was glad enough to go home and get his breakfast.

When he drove down town, after breakfast, the

when Billy said "Whoa!" to her in that unprovoked sort of a way.

Luckily for Billy, Mr. Ruggles was wide awake now, and saw how things were going; so up he stepped to the old gentleman and asked him with a grin if he would n't like the bag to be sent by express. Considering what a small matter had to be decided, they seemed to talk about it a long



"MR. RUGGLES STEPPED UP TO THE OLD GENTLEMAN AND ASKED IF HE WOULD N'T LIKE THE BAG TO BE SENT BY EXPRESS."

streets were quite full of people; and they all stared when they saw the little donkey-cart with "W. Jenks's Express" on it, and W. Jenks himself sitting in front driving, and looking as sober as a little judge. It struck Billy as very odd that nearly everybody he met should be laughing. There must be a great many jokes going about that morning, he thought.

The 7:20 was a through train from the West. Only two people got out of it, but one of these — as Billy observed with much satisfaction — was an old gentleman who was carrying what seemed to be a very heavy bag. Somehow, he could not bring himself to go up to the old gentleman and say, in a business-like way, "Baggage carried, sir?" — which was what he fully had made up his mind to do — and all that he did, to show anybody that there was an express around, was to cry "Whoa!" very loudly to Jenny. As Jenny was standing stock-still, she was very much startled

while; and Billy was sure that he heard his father's name mentioned. But the end of the talk was that the bag was put in the donkey-cart, and the old gentleman — after giving Billy the number of his house and agreeing to pay a quarter for the expressage — went by the short cut; and Billy drove away with his first load of express-matter as proud as a little king.

When he reached the house, there was the old gentleman waiting for him; and he told Billy to hitch the donkey and bring the bag inside. The bag was very heavy, just as much as Billy could stagger under — and he suddenly thought, what in the world would he do if anybody asked him to carry a trunk? He had not thought about trunks when he started his express, and now that he *did* think of them they made him fairly shiver!

When he deposited the bag inside the hall, the old gentleman asked how much there was to pay — for he seemed to have forgotten that he had

been very particular to get all that settled at the station; and when Billy said "A quarter," he looked thoughtful and said that a quarter was too much. It made Billy very uncomfortable to have to ask for money at all, and when the old gentleman spoke in that way, he grew quite red in the face and felt more uncomfortable still. "Very well, sir," he said, "you can pay anything you please. Or—or you need n't pay anything at all," and he began to move toward the door.

"Stop!" said the old gentleman. "That is n't business."

"No, it is n't," said Billy; "and it is n't business to make a bargain and then not stick to it. I told you, down at the station, what you would have to pay for having your bag brought up; and if you did n't want to pay it, you ought to have said so then. I—I beg your pardon, sir; I don't mean to be rude,"—for it suddenly struck Billy that this was a pretty up-and-down sort of a way for a little boy to talk to an old gentleman,— "but, you see, I'm not running this express for fun; and if everybody did as you're doing, it would n't pay to run it at all."

"You're not running it for fun, eh? Then what are you running it for?" asked the old gentleman, and there was a pleasant tone in his voice that quite took Billy by surprise. In the same friendly way he went on and asked more questions, and the long and short of it was that Billy told him the whole story: How his father was in trouble, and he wanted to help him; and how they were going to live in the little house, and his father was going to start a little store over by the New Row, and his mother was going to give lessons upon the piano—in fact, all about things generally. Of course, Billy did not mean to tell everything, in this way; but it was not until he had finished, that he suddenly realized that he had been telling all his father's plans to an entire stranger. Then he felt quite flustered, and said that it was time for him to go. The old gentleman had become very much excited while Billy was talking to him. He seemed to have forgotten all about the quarter. He walked up and down the hall, and swung his arms about at a great rate; so that when Billy said "Good-morning" to him, and came away, he did not even look up. But he came running down the steps, just as Billy was getting into the donkey-cart, and said:

"Here's your quarter, Billy Jenks. You're a good boy. You're going to work just the way I did. And, what's more, your father must be a good man." Then he went on, but apparently speaking to himself rather than to Billy, "Why, he's starting again just as I started in '57. That's the sort of man I like. He's got honesty and

pluck in him." Suddenly he gave the hitching-post a kick and burst out: "Yes, I'll do it! I'll do it, as sure as my name is——."

But Billy did not hear what his name was, for when the post was kicked Jenny started off with a jerk that made the cart rattle over the stones at a great rate, and completely drowned the old gentleman's voice. It struck him that this certainly was the queerest old gentleman he had ever come across. He concluded that the old fellow must be a little bit wrong in his head.

The next train was due at 11:40, and Billy was on hand at the station to meet it. But only two or three people got off, and none of these had any baggage to be carried. There was a big Irishman with a big satchel, to be sure; but he swung the satchel up on his shoulder, and as he passed Billy and the cart, he gave a comical look and said:

"An' it's W. Jinks's Express, is it? Bedad, W. Jinks, Oi'll be afther puttin' you an' th' express, an' th' donkey, an' all, up on tother showlder an' carryin' you all away to wunst, if you don't moind where you're lookin'!"

Billy thought this was very rude of him.

Just as he was driving away, feeling very much disappointed, Mr. Ruggles came running along the platform and called out:

"Hold on, Billy. Here's lots of work for you to do—about all the town wants you to move it!"

Billy thought that Mr. Ruggles must be poking fun at him,—though that was n't in Mr. Ruggles's line exactly,—but he pulled Jenny up, and then went back with Mr. Ruggles into the station. Mr. Ruggles gave him a sheet of paper with more than twenty orders on it; and while he was looking at the list and wondering if it could be real, the telephone bell rang and still another order was added!

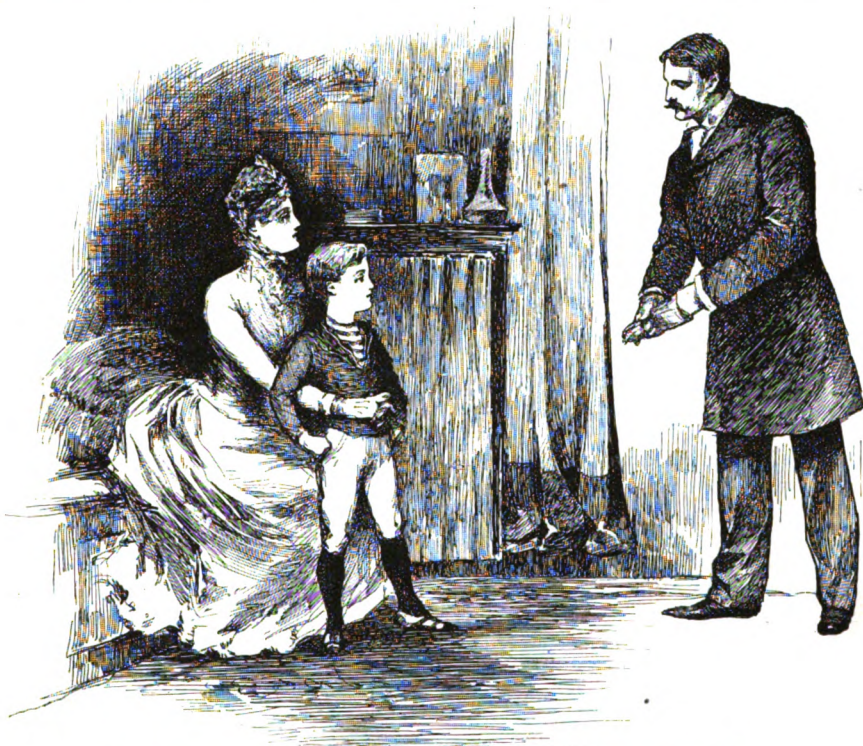
"They've been comin' in like that for th' last hour. I guess your special partner must be drummin' up work for you," said Mr. Ruggles with a dry chuckle. He went on, "You've got your hands full for this afternoon, Billy; an' as some of the things to be moved is too heavy for you to tackle, you'd better hire Black Jake, here, to help you. He'll work all th' afternoon for fifty cents. Get up there, out o' th' sun, you lazy critter. Go help Billy Jenks, an' earn some money, for once, outside o' chicken-stealin'!"

So Black Jake got up, grinning; and Billy, all in amaze, hired him for fifty cents and went off to attend to the first of his long list of orders. He could not understand it at all.

But if he had known how all the town had been talking about him, and his Express, and his Special Partner, that morning, he would not have been so much surprised by the sudden start that his business had taken. Many of his orders were sent by

people who expected to joke with Mr. Wilkinson about having patronized his express; many more by people who were pleased with Billy's pluck and wished to help him; and still others came from people who really wanted to send things about the town, and were glad of this way to do it. Jenny — she had to eat her dinner in half an hour; Billy was so excited that he bolted his in ten minutes — began to think in her donkey mind that the dis-

Jake walking beside the cart, ready to lend a hand in unloading, and reached the head of Prince street just as all the people were coming up from the station, in a crowd. Among the very first, he saw his father, and his mother, too; for, as it turned out, there was nothing serious the matter with her brother John, after all, and so his mother had not stayed to look after him, as she had expected to do when she went away.



“‘NOW, WILLIAM JENKS,’ SAID HIS FATHER, ‘WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?’”

mal days of her youth, when she had drawn a huckster's cart and had lived mainly on beatings, were come again.

By a little after six o'clock, Billy got his last load on board — a part of a broken bedstead and three broken chairs, to be taken to the cabinet-maker's — and the old lady who sent the load kept him waiting so long, and gave him so many directions, that he found that he would not have time to get to the station to meet the 6:30 train. He was sorry to miss that train, for more people came in on it than on all the others put together, and it was by that train that his father was coming — and he did very much wish his father to see him right in the thick of his work. But there was no use in worrying over what could n't be helped; so he drove along slowly, with Black

Billy was very glad to see his father and mother, and his first thought was to jump off the cart and go and kiss them. But his second thought was that he ought to show them that he really was a business man now, and that his business must come first and his pleasure afterward, — in other words, that he could n't go to kissing members of his family while he had a load to deliver. So he chirped Jenny into a fast trot, and only gave his father and mother a nod and a laugh as he whisked past them. They saw the cart and the queer sign on it, they caught a glimpse of the queer load, and on the train Mr. Jenks had bought a copy of *The Gazette*, and had read Billy's queer advertisement with amazement.

Had Billy gone crazy while they were away, or what had happened?

They were so puzzled that they just stood still and looked at each other,—while W. Jenks's Express went flying down the street, with Black Jake on a full run to keep beside it, and with the old lady's bit of a bedstead and three broken chairs dancing around the cart in a way that, had she seen it, would have made every hair in her false-front stand straight up on end and every one of her false teeth chatter! Mr. Jenks gave a long whistle—he had a way of giving whistles when anything surprised him very much—and then he and Mrs. Jenks went home. They were about the most astonished people in that town.

Billy reached home nearly as soon as his father and mother, and ran into the house to give them the kisses which he had wished to give them down town.

"Now, William Jenks," said his father, when the kissing was over, "what *does* all this mean?"

It gave Billy something of a start to be called William Jenks, in that way; for his father never dreamed of calling him anything but Billy, unless there was a storm brewing. But, as Billy was sure that there was nothing to raise a storm about in what he had been doing since his father went away, he did not mind very much; and with what he felt to be a fairly justifiable pride he went ahead and told all about his starting in the express business and what a capital start he had made of it.

"Then that was why you did not wish Jenny to be sold?" his mother asked, when he told about his consultation with Mr. Wilkinson in regard to the donkey's ownership.

"Why, of course it was," Billy answered; as though his desire to use Jenny as an express-donkey could be the only possible reason why he should be unwilling to part with her for good and all—and he never quite understood what it was that made his mother get up just then, give him a great hug and kiss, and say to his father in a triumphant sort of way, "I told you so!" Nor did he understand why it was that his father and mother laughed so, when he told them about the special partnership that he had formed with Mr. Wilkinson; nor what made his father look so oddly when he told about his long talk with the queer old gentleman who came on the train.

However, there was no mistaking the way in which they both hugged him when he came to the end of his story and gave his father the six dollars and seventy-five cents he had earned that day—and explained that there would have been half a dollar more, if only he had been a little stronger and so had not been compelled to hire Black Jake to help him. But Billy could not help thinking, considering what a good day he had made of it,

that it was rather unreasonable in his mother to cry all the time that she was hugging him; and he wondered if cinders could have got into his father's eyes, on the train,—he winked so and they looked so red and watery. Just as he was full of delight that his plan had worked so well, his father brought him up all standing—after most of the hugging was over—by telling him that the express-business could not go on! It would n't do, his father said, for such a little chap as he was to go at such hard work, even if they all were starving; and they were nowhere near starving, as yet. There was just the slimmest sort of a chance, his father went on, that at the final meeting of his creditors—the next day, things might be arranged so that he could go on; and, even if he were forced into bankruptcy, he said, he and Mrs. Jenks could earn enough money to keep the little house going, without making Billy help them, for a few years.

By the time that his father was through with all that he had to say, Billy had to own up that the right thing for him to do was to work hard at the public school, and so get ready to take care of his mother and the baby, in case his father should get sick, or die, or do anything of that sort. But it certainly was hard on him, he thought, to have to give up the express-business just as he had made such a splendid start in it.

The next day Mr. Jenks's creditors held their last meeting before making a bankrupt of him. After everybody had settled into their chairs, Mr. Wilkinson said that they had a very unpleasant piece of work to do, and that the sooner they were through with it the better. All the creditors but *one*, he said,—and as he said this he looked very hard at old Mr. Skimmington, and so did everybody else; and, while nobody spoke a word, a sort of growl went around the room,—all the creditors but *one* had consented to an extension; but since this *one* could not be brought to take a liberal and sensible view of the case, there was nothing for his client to do but to go into bankruptcy. Then there was a dead silence, and everybody looked hard at old Mr. Skimmington. And then, in an instant, Mr. Skimmington said, in his sharp way:

"I've changed my mind. I'll give him an extension, too!"

All the other gentlemen were on their feet, and crowding around Mr. Skimmington, and shaking hands with him, in no time; and all of them were talking at once, as hard as ever they could talk. Mr. Jenks was the only man in the room who remained seated. He scarcely had dared to hope, even, that he would get an extension: and when Mr. Skimmington came round in this sudden sort

